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Response to Welsh second language review group recommendations

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Audience

Welsh and Welsh second language practitioners; learners in Key Stages 3 and 4; parents/carers; local authorities; education consortia; initial teacher training centres; awarding organisations; the Welsh Language Commissioner; university schools of Welsh; and other stakeholders and partners involved in the field.

Overview

In July 2012, the Minister for Education and Skills established a group to review Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 to consider how to address poor standards and low attainment in the subject. The Group's report *One language for all* was published in September 2013. This document contains the Welsh Government response to the Group's recommendations.

Further information

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/wagreviews/one-language-for-all/?skip=1&lang=en

Related documents

One language for all: Review of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 (2013)

Welsh-medium Education Strategy (2010)

A living language: a language for living – Welsh Language Strategy 2012–17 (2012)

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Introduction

In July 2012, my predecessor established a group to review Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 to consider how to address poor standards and low attainment in the subject. The membership of the group was comprised of representatives from a cross-section of key stakeholders and was chaired by Professor Sioned Davies, Head of the School of Welsh at Cardiff University. The main objective of the Group was to consider what changes should be made to teaching and assessment of Welsh second language at Key Stages 3 and 4 to enable more learners to use the language effectively within and beyond the classroom. The group was tasked with delivering a report which set out their recommendations.

The report of the Welsh second language Review Group *One language for all*, published in September 2013, highlighted many issues in the current approach to Welsh second language and explored themes that I am committed to addressing during the next stage of work in our review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales.

On 12 March I announced that Professor Graham Donaldson would be chairing an independent review of these arrangements and would provide recommendations to inform our development of a Curriculum for Wales. The report of the Group will form an important part of the evidence base as Professor Donaldson takes this work forward.

All changes to the teaching of Welsh in English-medium schools will reflect the Welsh Government's commitment in the Welsh-medium Education Strategy to improve standards in Welsh second language to enable young people to become competent Welsh speakers in the future. This also contributes to the commitment made in the Welsh language strategy, *A living language: a language for living*, to increase the provision of Welsh language activities for children and young people and their awareness of the value of the language.

I would like to thank Professor Sioned Davies and members of the Welsh second language Review Group for all their work in producing the report and its recommendations. I would also like to express my gratitude to everyone who worked alongside them and provided evidence. A range of stakeholders have contributed to the development of this report and we will continue to work with them and other partners as we take this work forward.

The *One language for all* recommendations are many and varied. Some are already being addressed while others are recommendations for the long-term and relate to the overdue, but necessary, overhaul of Welsh second language provision. I have set out below my initial response to the recommendations. In doing so, I have grouped those recommendations that relate to the curriculum in the first instance and these will be considered by Professor Donaldson.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Huw Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot above the 'i' in Lewis.

Huw Lewis AM
Minister for Education and Skills

Response to recommendations – the curriculum

Recommendation 1

Welsh Government to ensure that Welsh second language continues to be a statutory subject within the National Curriculum and continues to be a compulsory subject for all pupils in Wales until the end of Key Stage 4.

Recommendation 2

Welsh Government to give equal status to Welsh second language within the National Curriculum, ensuring that the subject has the same prominence as the core subjects in performance measures.

Recommendation 4

Welsh Government to make the social and historical context of Wales and the Welsh language an integral part of the curriculum across all subjects so that pupils gain an understanding of the context of the language and understand the contribution of the language to Wales and to being Welsh.

Recommendation 6

Welsh Government to revise the Welsh programme of study, over a three to five year period, and use the National Literacy Framework for Welsh as a basis for a revised curriculum to include:

- one continuum of learning for Welsh with clear expectations for pupils learning Welsh in English-medium, bilingual and Welsh-medium settings and
- guidance, support materials and training.

As a consequence the Welsh second language element of the Welsh programme of study would be removed along with the term Welsh second language.

Recommendation 10 (a)

Welsh Government, within a three to five year timetable, to develop new level descriptions with the revised programme of study for Welsh and produce guidance for schools which includes defined expectations for learners in Welsh-medium, bilingual and English-medium schools.

In addition, consideration should be given to the introduction of a Welsh reading test for 8-14-year-old pupils in English-medium settings.

Prior to the new arrangements becoming operational, training would be necessary to equip teachers and to inform them of the new requirements. New national teaching resources would also be required to coincide with the developments.

I have asked Professor Donaldson to consider these important recommendations as part of his independent review of our curriculum and assessment arrangements.

Pending the outcome of this review, further consideration will be given to how any of our curriculum changes are governed and implemented. This will include giving consideration to the need for bespoke training, teaching and learning resources and guidance material to support their delivery. The Welsh Government is fully committed to training and professional development in order to support our workforce and as tools for maintaining standards of provision.

Response to other recommendations

Recommendation 3

Estyn to show more clearly how standards in Welsh second language contribute to the general judgement for the whole school, and to include recommendations for improvement where applicable.

I accept this recommendation in principle. However, Estyn is an independent inspectorate and, as such, any changes to the Common Inspection Framework will need to be taken forward by the Chief Inspector.

Recommendation 5

Welsh Government, in collaboration with the Welsh Language Commissioner, Careers Wales and school career advisors should promote Welsh as a skill for the workplace.

I accept this recommendation in principle, and propose that the Welsh Government work in partnership to facilitate the promotion of Welsh as a skill for the workplace. Welsh language skills can give individuals an advantage in the jobs market. Careers Wales and school career advisors are well placed to provide professional advice and guidance on the opportunities available. Up to date labour market intelligence is hosted on the Careerswales.com website in a format that can be easily used and understood and the Welsh Government recently published intelligence on the demand from employers for Welsh language skills in eight sectors.

Looking more broadly at the provision of careers education, the Welsh Government is working with various stakeholders to develop a European Social Fund (ESF) funded programme to increase school capacity to deliver the Careers and the World of Work framework and improve the quality of its delivery. This will include an examination of provision aimed at ensuring young people have a view of the modern world of work, the skills required and, importantly, the career options available.

Recommendation 7

Local authorities and regional consortia to facilitate Key Stage 2/3 Welsh second language cluster moderation to ensure that secondary teachers are fully informed of pupils' previous learning so that pupils have the opportunity to build on their skills and knowledge on transfer to secondary school.

The current statutory assessment arrangements for the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 include cluster group meetings to inform transition arrangements. This should include robust arrangements for moderation of examples of Year 6 and Year 9 learner profiles for Welsh second language selected from within the cluster group's own schools. These arrangements should add value to school-based standardisation and moderation by strengthening teacher assessment. They should also ensure that good practice within the cluster is identified, shared and built upon, to set an agenda for improvement that reflects local circumstances and needs.

Recognising the need to improve our approach to assessment in schools and for more robust, consistent and reliable measures of learner progress, Welsh Government commissioned the Australian Council for Educational Research to undertake research into, and an evaluation of, existing Key Stages 2 and 3 Teacher Assessments in Wales.

The findings of this research and the impact of existing assessment arrangements are currently being evaluated and considered in parallel with the wider review of the National Curriculum and Assessment arrangements to determine what further action and support is required to secure more consistent and reliable teacher assessment.

I therefore agree with this recommendation, and the Welsh Government will work with consortia and local authorities to ensure that this statutory procedure is being implemented effectively in the context of Welsh second language.

Recommendation 8

Welsh Government to develop clear guidance on progression from one key stage to the next to ensure that learners continue to develop their skills if they transfer from a Welsh-medium to an English-medium school.

I accept this recommendation in principle. Improving linguistic progression is one of the key aims of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and receives attention in the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. Therefore, the Welsh Government will consider the need and scope for guidance following the outcome of the independent review.

Recommendation 9

Local authorities, as part of their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans, to ensure that appropriate A level Welsh second language provision is available in sufficient locations across Wales.

Maintaining and increasing the number of learners continuing to study Welsh at A Level is one of the targets of the Welsh-medium Education Strategy and is monitored by means of the Welsh in Education Strategic Plans. In order to meet the target, it is imperative that provision is readily available for learners across Wales to continue to study Welsh. I agree with this recommendation and will be closely monitoring the availability and take-up of provision.

Recommendation 10 (b and c)

Welsh Government within a three to five year timetable to:

- develop a new full GCSE (or equivalent) qualification based on the revised curriculum and
- remove the short course GCSE.

I agree with the recommendation to remove the short course. Alternative Welsh second language provision will need to be developed in the context of any proposals that emerge during Professor Donaldson's independent review.

Recommendation 11

When developing the new GCSE (or equivalent) qualification, awarding organisations should ensure that:

- the syllabus is not too reliant on contexts or themes
- the new assessment procedures have more appropriate controlled assessments and
- that opportunities to recite or re-write prepared responses in oral and written assessments are avoided / minimised so that learners are encouraged to prepare in a way that will be beneficial when using the Welsh language beyond the classroom on completion of the qualification.

I accept this recommendation in principle. Welsh Government will work with Awarding Organisations to ensure that revised Welsh second language GCSE qualifications are appropriate and in line with proposals developed during Professor Donaldson's independent review.

Recommendation 12

Post-16 qualifications to be revised to include:

- an A level qualification with an emphasis on developing oral language skills suitable for the workplace and
- compulsory language modules to be included as part of the Welsh Baccalaureate qualification.

I agree with the recommendation with regard to revising post-16 Welsh second language qualifications. Beyond Key Stage 4, revisions to the current Welsh second language AS and A levels will be made in line with changes to the curriculum and GCSEs. During the process, the Welsh Government will work with Awarding Organisations and other stakeholders to ensure that the new AS and A levels meet the needs of learners and develop Welsh skills which can be transferred from the classroom and examination hall to be used in the community and the world of work.

Following the outcome of the Review of Qualifications, work is being taken forward on a revised model for the Welsh Baccalaureate. In the new model, essential skills will be developed and assessed through a variety of Challenges. Consideration is being given as to how Challenges relating to Welsh second language and other languages can be made available for appropriate age groups. Learning providers and learners will be able to choose which specific Challenges they undertake, and therefore no individual Challenge will be compulsory.

In addition, consideration will be given to how other Welsh language modules can form part of post-16 learning programmes.

Recommendation 13

Welsh Government, in partnership with regional consortia, local

authorities and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) centres to provide guidance and training for teachers on the most effective language teaching methods based on research and best practice.

I accept this recommendation in principle. Welsh Government will consider the need and scope for guidance and training following the outcome of the independent review of curriculum and assessment and the work being taken forward by Professor John Furlong as expert Initial Teacher Training Adviser for the Welsh Government.

Recommendation 14

Welsh Government to produce clear guidelines for schools on the time pupils need to learn and practise the language in order to make good progress in Welsh second language, to include examples of best practice. Welsh Government to ensure that local authorities audit, record and report on the time allocated for Welsh second language through the WESPs.

Recommendation 15

Welsh Government should:

- develop best practice guidance on using incidental Welsh in school activities and using Welsh across the curriculum based on the pilot project to extend the use of Welsh as a medium of instruction in English-medium primary schools and
- set targets to increase the use of Welsh-medium learning across the curriculum, based on best practice, in English-medium schools.

Recommendation 17

Based on best practice and individual circumstances, schools to:

- plan to ensure that the best teaching environment for successful language acquisition is provided to take account of both class sizes and pupil ability and
- consider using teaching/language assistants who have appropriate Welsh-language skills to support oral tasks.

I agree with these recommendations in principle. Welsh Government will consider the need and scope for guidance and training following the outcome of the independent review.

The Welsh Government will continue to encourage schools to share good practice within and across consortia. Consortia and local authorities will continue to set appropriate targets for improving Welsh provision in English-medium schools through their Welsh in Education Strategic Plans (WESPs). The Welsh Government will also continue to ensure that local authorities audit, record and report on the time allocated for Welsh second language through the WESPs.

Recommendation 16

Welsh Government to build on best practice and work with local authorities, regional consortia and schools to trial intensive periods of Welsh language learning in primary and secondary schools.

I accept this recommendation in principle. The Welsh second language Action Plan, published in 2012, included an objective to establish immersion courses for pupils from English-medium schools to improve their confidence, language skills and motivation to speak Welsh beyond the classroom. The Welsh Government has grant funded the Urdd in 2013 and 2014 to pilot intensive courses for learners and will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of this / similar provision. The feasibility and practicality of widening the availability of such provision and adapting other successful models of immersion from Wales will be considered as part of Professor Donaldson's independent review.

Recommendation 18

Welsh Government in partnership with regional consortia to establish a national group of practitioners and regional consortia advisors with an expertise in Welsh second language to develop resources for dissemination and sharing via Hwb, with the aim of reducing duplication.

Recommendation 19

Welsh Government should continue to commission appropriate high quality national teaching resources which will be available for teachers through Hwb.

I agree with these recommendations. The Welsh Government will continue to commission high quality teaching and learning resources. The Welsh Government will continue to hold identification of needs panels made up of practitioners and advisors to identify the requirements. Resources identified will be subject to competitive tendering to approved suppliers and the development and quality will be monitored by groups of practitioners and others with expertise in Welsh second language. The resources will be made available in the appropriate format and via the appropriate channels depending on purpose of resource and requirement.

Recommendation 20

Welsh Government, in partnership with regional consortia to develop a national, regional and local training strategy to provide continuous professional development training to practitioners, to include:

- training for secondary teachers who have not specialised in teaching Welsh second language
- language and methodology training through the Sabbatical Scheme;
- opportunities for teachers to observe high quality lessons and
- dissemination of best practice including through Lead Practitioner Schools.

It should be ensured that teachers are released by schools to attend training with the support of the head teacher and senior management.

I agree with this recommendation. The Welsh Government will continue to fund activities on a school, local and regional level as part of the programme of support offered by regional consortia via the Welsh in Education Grant. This includes opportunities for continuous professional development and will facilitate the sharing of best practice amongst practitioners. National

programmes such as the Sabbatical Scheme will also continue to provide more intensive periods of language and teaching methodology training.

Recommendation 21

Welsh Government to take steps to ensure that every primary and secondary school has sufficient numbers of teachers qualified and able to teach Welsh.

I agree in principle with this recommendation. Following the review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) in Wales undertaken in 2013, Professor John Furlong has been appointed to work with the ITT sector to raise the standard, quality and consistency of training and assessment in ITT centres across Wales. Further consideration will also be given to other elements in the process of developing a qualified workforce, including the Teacher Supply Model used to inform ITT intake targets, School Staffing Regulations and Qualified Teacher Status Standards for Wales, to ensure they all fully reflect the needs of the sector.

Recommendation 22

Welsh Government in partnership with stakeholders to promote Welsh as a subject at A level and degree level and the teaching of Welsh second language as a potential career. In addition, Welsh Government to continue to offer incentives to ensure that more students consider studying Welsh as a PGCE subject.

I accept this recommendation in principle. The ITT incentive grants available in Wales for new eligible students on specified postgraduate (PGCE) ITT courses leading to Qualified Teacher Status starting in the 2013/14 academic year included £6-15,000 for trainees following postgraduate secondary courses in Welsh. Additional primary supplement of £1,000 was also available for those with degrees in Welsh. The availability of these grants for different subjects and stages / phases is dependent on recruitment and policy priorities.

In addition student teachers commencing secondary ITT courses and training through the medium of Welsh may be eligible for the Welsh-medium Improvement Supplement. This is aimed at student teachers who need extra support to raise confidence in their ability to teach effectively in Welsh.

Welsh Government will facilitate the promotion of Welsh as a subject and as skill for the workplace.

Recommendation 23

Initial Teacher Training centres to review all PGCE and BA Education courses to:

- strengthen the second language methodology training element of the secondary Welsh course based on research and best practice
- strengthen the Welsh tuition and Welsh second language teaching methodology training received as a part of the primary course based on research and best practice and

- include Welsh language awareness and an introduction to incidental Welsh in all courses.

I agree in principle with this recommendation which will be fed into Professor Furlong's work.

Recommendation 24

Informal opportunities to use and practise language skills are essential to reinforce school-based learning and the responsibility needs to be shared by a number of stakeholders, and as a minimum should include:

- opportunities for pupils to use Welsh and to hear the language being used outside the classroom, within the school setting. This should be a whole school initiative and not the sole responsibility of the Welsh departments and teachers
- more opportunities for pupils in English-medium settings to use and hear Welsh outside of school. Welsh Government, by funding organisations such as the Mentrau Iaith and the Urdd, should facilitate this and
- more opportunities to access Welsh-language services, especially digital services so that pupils are encouraged to use of the language.

I accept this recommendation in principle. The Welsh second language Action Plan, published in 2012, included an objective to work through existing Welsh-medium networks to establish new, innovative activities/projects which give pupils the opportunity to use Welsh outside their Welsh lessons.

The Welsh Government has grant funded the Urdd from 2012 - 2014 to pilot innovative Welsh-language activities, in partnership with Mentrau Iaith and others, in English-medium schools and will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of this / similar provision. The feasibility and practicality of widening the availability of such provision will be considered as part of Professor Donaldson's independent review.